



european centre for nature conservation

Making the connection!

Guidelines for involving stakeholders
in the implementation of ecological
networks



- Prepared by: ECNC–European Centre for Nature Conservation
- Copyright: © 2009 ECNC–European Centre for Nature Conservation
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of ECNC.
- Citation: Jones-Walters, L., M. Snethlage, K. Čivić, A. Çil, and I. Smit (2009) *Making the connection! Guidelines for involving stakeholders in the implementation of ecological networks*. ECNC, Tilburg, the Netherlands
- Available from: ECNC–European Centre for Nature Conservation
PO Box 90154
5000 LG Tilburg
The Netherlands
Email: ecnc@ecnc.org
www.ecnc.org
- Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report do not necessarily constitute ECNC policy and do not necessarily reflect its views or opinions.
- Funding: Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality,
Directorate of Knowledge Management
- Photos: ECNC and Project Partners, Saxifraga, Wikimedia Commons
- Layout and printing: Verdivas, Tilburg

The project partners

Alterra

Wageningen, The Netherlands
www.terra.wur.nl



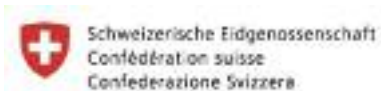
Leibniz-Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)

Müncheberg, Germany
www.zalf.de



Federal Office for Environment (FOEN)

Switzerland
www.bafu.admin.ch



Estonian University of Life Sciences

Estonia
www.emu.ee



Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection (SINP)

Croatia
www.dzzp.hr



Natural England

UK
www.naturalengland.gov.uk



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	4
1. Introduction	6
Context and purpose	6
Who should use these guidelines?	7
How to use this document	8
2. Stakeholder involvement in the process of ecological network implementation	9
3. The main ingredients for successful stakeholder involvement	12
Preparation	16
Information	18
Analysis	20
Communication	22
Consultation	24
Participation	26
Conflict management	28
Decision-making	30
4. List of tools and resources	32
Preparation tools & resources	33
Information tools & resources	35
Analysis tools & resources	36
Communication tools & resources	38
Consultation tools & resources	39
Participation tools & resources	41
Conflict management tools & resources	43
Decision-making tools & resources	44
5. Selected references	46

PREFACE

There has been a growing realization that size, shape and connectivity are all factors that contribute to ecosystem functioning; all over Europe habitats and ecosystems are becoming smaller, more fragmented and their isolation from other areas is increasing. Habitat isolation and loss prevent natural species from reaching migration and dispersal destinations, forces them to live in habitats that may not be large enough for them to maintain viable populations, reduces or removes the potential for them to achieve genetic change and prevents them from responding to the consequences and impacts of climate change. As a response to this, ecological networks are a highly effective concept that has successfully bridged the science-policy interface and they have been the basis of a paradigm shift in our consideration of biodiversity conservation and management in Europe.

The development of a Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) forms one of the priorities of European nature conservation under the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) endorsed by 54 European countries in Sofia, in 1995; and the 2003 Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity set a target of 2006 for preparing indicative maps for all regions of Europe. PEEN is based on existing initiatives and European directives, its backbone being Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network. Article 10 of the 1992 Habitats Directive specifically relates to land-use planning, the development of policies and the exploration of possibilities for improving ecological coherence between sites designated under the directive. Several initiatives, funded by both the EU and by Member States, have successfully created spatial presentations of European ecological networks. Many European countries have already developed or are in the process of developing national ecological networks and, at a regional and local level, a number of planning authorities have applied the principles of ecological connectivity to spatial planning and strategies. Often the latter have included a significant level of stakeholder and public involvement and participation in the planning process.

Indeed, as the policy frameworks for ecological networks at different levels have become more widespread and sophisticated, so interest in the translation of plans into the practical implementation of ecological networks has increased. There is now a clear need to support and actively drive this move towards practical implementation throughout Europe. The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (ANF), in recognizing this need, has therefore sponsored this project; whose aim is to investigate current practice, identify best practice and specify gaps in knowledge. Based on this, it has sought to derive innovation and provide guidance for key actors who are or may be involved in creating ecological networks in practice. This report therefore provides advice and recommendations on the practical implementation of ecological networks in real situations; including how to stimulate knowledge transfer, practical partnerships and consensus-building within and between the stakeholders involved.

It is specifically intended to avoid overloading the user with information; it therefore focuses on key recommendations, the best and most relevant case studies and the key areas of information. It does however provide ample references and Internet addresses for the interested reader to pursue a number of different avenues that may interest them. We hope that it will stimulate an increase in practical implementation and action at local level and look forward to seeing the results in the years to come.

The realization of this project would not have been possible without the contributions of the project partners. We would like to express our gratitude to all of them for their cooperation and for the substantial amount of work that they have put into the project. Additionally we would like to thank the Steering Committee members for their support and guidance throughout.

Rob Wolters

Executive Director ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation

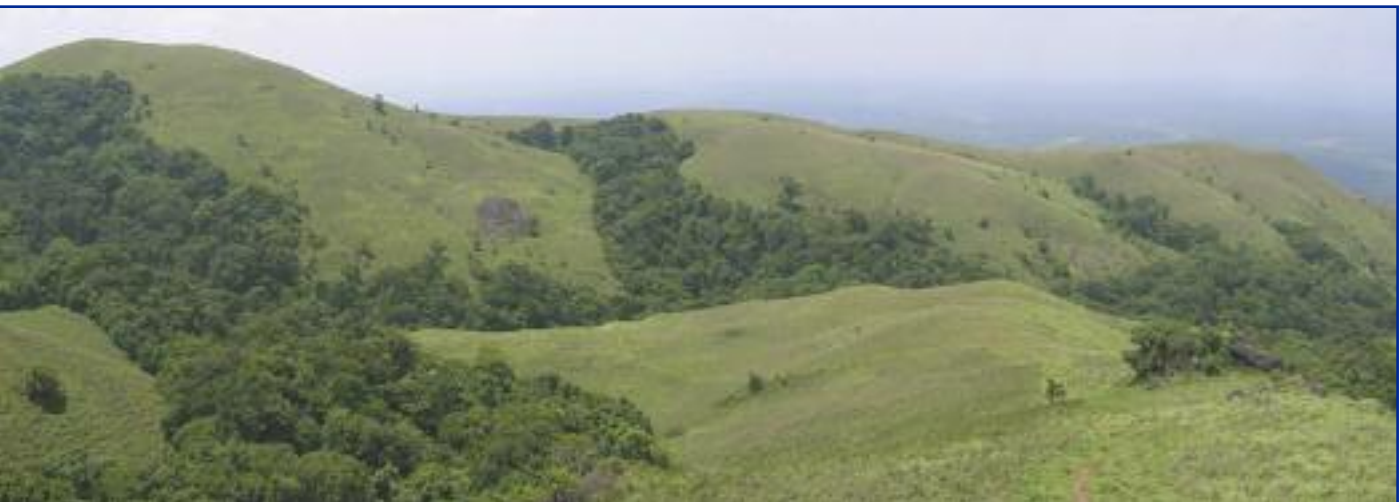


Context and purpose

Increasing ecological connectivity between (protected) nature areas is one of the pillars of present-day biodiversity conservation. Ecological networks can be implemented at both policy and practical level. At European level the strategic frameworks and the policies that govern the implementation of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) have been signed by 54 countries and are now largely in place. Across Europe, ecological networks and green veining projects are being planned and integrated into national and regional spatial plans.

In many cases regions have included ecological connectivity in their spatial plans, thereby providing a framework within which municipalities, rural development initiatives and NGOs can integrate these considerations within their programmes and projects. There are also many examples of a bottom-up approach in which individuals and organisations have taken the initiative for themselves and begun to create networks without waiting for an overarching strategy to arrive.

It is at these levels, that we can see practical implementation taking place; for instance, through the delivery of agri-environment schemes, by using flagship species that utilise ecological networks as drivers for habitat maintenance and creation initiatives, or by organising local stakeholders to increase ownership for actions taken and to improve the efficiency of the delivery process. However, the implementation of ecological networks can be complex as it involves a wide range of people - stakeholders, with often conflicting views and interests. As a result, progress in the practical implementation of ecological network projects has so far been quite slow.



These guidelines are one of the main outputs of KEN: 'Knowledge for Ecological Networks - Catalyzing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of ecological networks in Europe'; a two year international project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (ANF). It was set up with the aims of analysing the process of ecological network implementation in six countries across



Europe, increasing our understanding of the process of stakeholder participation in the delivery of ecological networks and identifying critical success factors and most frequent barriers as a guide for future action by practitioners and policy makers.

This document is therefore the result of a process of analysis and discussion with key stakeholders, practitioners and experts. The preliminary findings of the project were presented at a conference on ecological network planning and implementation in Oisterwijk (The Netherlands) on 1 and 2 October 2008. The conclusions of this work were then tested and discussed with practitioners during a workshop organized in Vught (The Netherlands) on 11 and 12 February 2009. These meetings focused on making concrete and realistic recommendations for better and more effective implementation of ecological networks in Europe.

They take the sum of all the outputs from the project, including the extensive input made by workshop delegates, stakeholders and the project partners, and place them in a concise set of recommendations and advice supported by best practice from across Europe. This document is intended to give support to the organization and management of the implementation of ecological networks projects, once the need for ecological networks has been recognized.

Who should use these guidelines?

These guidelines will provide practical advice and background information for a range of people and organizations that have an interest or a direct involvement in the delivery of ecological networks.

Generally the practical implementation of ecological networks takes place at parcel, property, farm, landscape and municipal level and involves a number of stakeholders: land owners, project managers, wildlife NGOs, civil servants of local authorities, funding organisations and, often, interested members of the public.



Specifically, these guidelines should be useful for practitioners in the field of ecological networks implementation working at the local and regional level; particularly those who have been appointed to lead and coordinate the participative process of ecological networks planning and implementation at the local (municipal) level.

How to use this document

Although the success of delivering ecological networks at the local level depends a great deal on actions such as good planning and project management, these guidelines will not describe these methods and techniques, but assume that the project manager is already familiar with them. Instead they focus specifically on the recommendations and the existing resources and knowledge for successfully involving stakeholders in the overall process. The guidelines should thus be considered as an addition to sound project planning and management. Where relevant, a brief reference to the basics of planning and management is given, in as far as it might influence the success of the stakeholder involvement process.

The process of involving stakeholders in the delivery of ecological networks should be embedded in the overall project planning and management. These guidelines focus specifically on the ideas, recommendations and resources for involving the stakeholders and do not pay full attention to other aspects of the project planning and management cycle (such as problem definition, finances, tracking progress etc). The guidelines seek to avoid overloading the user with information; they therefore focus on key recommendations, the best and most relevant case studies and the key areas of information. They also provide ample references and internet addresses for the interested readers to pursue a number of different avenues.

The phases which are later described in greater detail in these guidelines are not meant to be run through in a linear way from beginning to end. There are a great number of different situations, each requiring its specific approach. Also many elements of the stakeholder involvement described below, and the tools and resources that are useful to carry them out, are often run in parallel, or iteratively: the output of one phase is the input of another. The process and techniques are interrelated.

2

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS OF ECOLOGICAL NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION

The stimulus to begin a project about ecological connectivity can come from a number of sources. It can be 'top-down', driven by national or regional legislation and incentives, but can also be 'bottom-up' and derive from local initiatives, opportunities and enthusiasm. Whatever the main driver, local level implementation of ecological networks is set to affect a range of stakeholders.



Stakeholders in the practical implementation of ecological networks are people:

- Who are directly involved in the project and who need to carry out the practical decisions and actions in terms of planning, design and actual implementation in terms of protection, management, restoration or creation of habitat and associated work with species (e.g. landowners and managers, contractors, conservation NGOs and volunteers, etc)
- Who are directly affected by the plan or activity and can influence it but who are not directly involved in the work (e.g. adjacent landowners, local residents, hunters, birdwatchers, recreational users, etc)
- Whose permission, approval or (financial) support will be needed (e.g. Regional and municipal authorities, local representatives of ministries, agencies and state institutes, etc)
- Who may participate in implementation via community mobilisation efforts or by representing a particular segment of society (e.g. environmental organizations, elected officials, chamber of commerce representatives, neighborhood advisory council members, religious leaders, etc)
- Who may not be directly involved but who can influence opinions for or against the plan or activity (e.g. local celebrities, local media, elected officials, business or trade union leaders, environmental organizations, chamber of commerce representatives, teachers, neighborhood group members, religious leaders, etc)



It is now well known that the process of involving stakeholders in planning for the implementation of projects or programmes is likely to lead to much more effective delivery. They gain a level of ownership for actions and outcomes that cannot be achieved through a more traditional, less inclusive approach. The choice of stakeholders who should be involved depends on local circumstances. Generally, in areas with more people there is more competition for land and there are likely to be more stakeholders associated with any given issue or action (and an increased potential for conflict and resistance). Specifically, conflict and resistance can occur in any situation, especially if the process is handled badly. Stakeholder involvement in ecological network implementation has proved to be a complex and iterative multi-stage process; however, the early involvement of key stakeholders is a key factor in the success of ecological connectivity projects at all levels. The process often begins with some ambition, vision or strategy defined at the national level in the shape of a National Ecological Network map. This guidance (often presented in the form of a map) is typically prepared by the national government in consultation with a limited number of key stakeholders representing the major interest groups (agricultural sector, transport sector, conservation organizations and scientific advisers). The general vision about connecting core areas of nature conservation must then be translated into more detailed and specific maps and plans at regional level, again with the involvement of relevant stakeholders. This is the level at which the managers of local delivery plans can also become involved along with regional interest groups.

The closer to the practical level of implementing a concrete ecological connectivity plan in the field, the more pressing and direct do the implications become for individuals, communities and (affected) organizations. This is the level where decisions about protected area designation, change in management or habitat restoration have the most impacting consequences for farmers, land owners, hunters and other stakeholders. This is therefore the level where the resistance is likely to be greatest and where good facilitation and negotiation skills are required to lead formal and informal participative processes. Figure 1 illustrates the basic architecture of delivery: from national to local level, as outlined above.

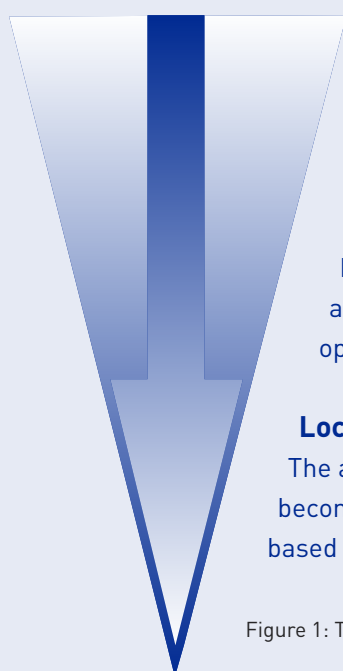
The need to actively involve stakeholders starts once a local or regional vision about increasing ecological connectivity has been formulated and ends when the ecological connectivity has been established. A number of phases need to be executed in the transition from vision to actual implementation; different groups of stakeholders are typically involved at the various stages in this process.

A well prepared and comprehensive approach to stakeholder involvement should therefore be fully imbedded into the delivery of ecological networks in the typical phases of the project cycle: vision, problem definition and analysis, strategy, plan, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. However, the practitioner should be careful only to involve individuals or organisations who are essential to project delivery. Stakeholder involvement is a time- and resource-consuming activity that should not be over-complicated by extending engagement beyond those necessary for successful implementation.

The recommendations, tools and resources presented in these guidelines aim to give some orientation to those managing this process.



Action and Results



National Level

Limited parameters put around how and why within an open and enabling policy framework i.e. a national strategy

Regional / provincial Level

More explicit parameters put around how and why with the accommodation of regional / provincial specific challenges and opportunities i.e. federal / regional partnerships

Local Level

The architecture is closed as the parameters of how and why become explicitly defined, delivered and tested within stakeholder based participative initiatives

Figure 1: The Architecture of Delivery

3

THE MAIN INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

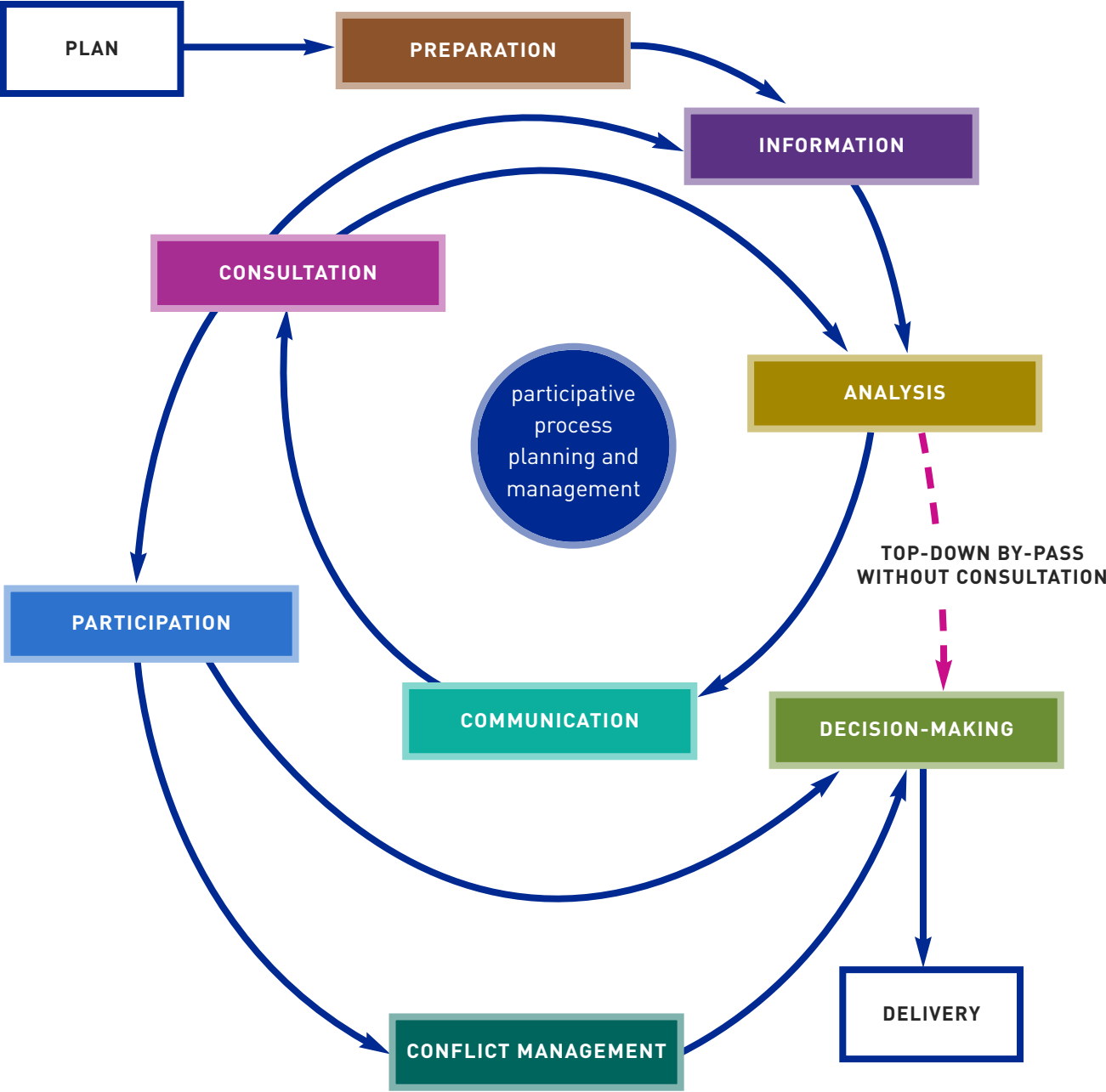


Figure 2: From planning to delivery: the key stages in implementing an ecological network.

Experience shows that no process which requires stakeholder participation (and which is therefore influenced by the unpredictability of human behaviour) is as straightforward or simply defined as the pathway illustrated in Figure 2. However, the journey from original plan to local delivery of ecological networks can be seen to have a number of clearly defined stages and the figure does provide a useful framework within which to think about how and when things should be done. The interrelated and interdependent stages shown by the coloured boxes linked by blue arrows in the figure are:

- Preparation
- Information
- Analysis
- Communication
- Consultation
- Participation
- Conflict management
- Decision-making

Discussions supporting the development of plans should be based on the best available **INFORMATION**. This information may be in the form of ecological knowledge but also the socio-economic context and knowledge of sectors that depend on or influence the ecological networks, as well as the attributes of the stakeholders (education, income, psychology etc).

The information will enable an **ANALYSIS** of the situation in terms of ecological priorities but also the socio-economic interests that might be influenced by the plans. An analysis of the stakeholders will result in a better understanding of who they are in terms of their ability to influence the process and their interest in the issue. This helps in defining the **COMMUNICATION** strategy by adapting the message and means to the different stakeholder groups identified in the analysis.

Informed stakeholders can then be **CONSULTED** on a number of issues. Their responses will be fed back into the **INFORMATION** and **ANALYSIS** process and help define the appropriate **PARTICIPATION** strategy in which the stakeholders or their representatives will be involved. Where necessary,



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT techniques will be employed as part of the participatory process. **DECISION MAKING** will therefore be informed and consensual.

The relative importance of each of these basic ingredients and their sequence differs according to the local situation and the stage of advancement of each project. In essence the practitioner should build their approach on flexibility: expect that some of these stages will be implemented in parallel; anticipate that there will be time spent jumping backwards and forwards between points in the delivery cycle; prepare to leave stages out; and assume that aspects will have to be redesigned or repeated to accommodate changing local circumstances. There are successful examples of initiatives being closed down and restarted (often with a different name) in order to bypass immovable problems and disagreements. Others originate from chance meetings, opportunities and the unlikely, even chaotic coming together of a number of favourable circumstances that could never be predicted within a logical framework. In these circumstances success has been generated from strong leadership and the ability to act quickly; often without any clearly defined plan or process.



Each of these stages is set out below and is described in detail in the pages which follow; these include specific and practical recommendations based on the experience and knowledge of practitioners involved in this project. Each stage also has a list of tools and resources indicated by ➡ which are described in more detail in Section 4 (Page 32).

PREPARATION

16

INFORMATION

18

ANALYSIS

20

COMMUNICATION

22

CONSULTATION

24

PARTICIPATION

26

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

28

DECISION-MAKING

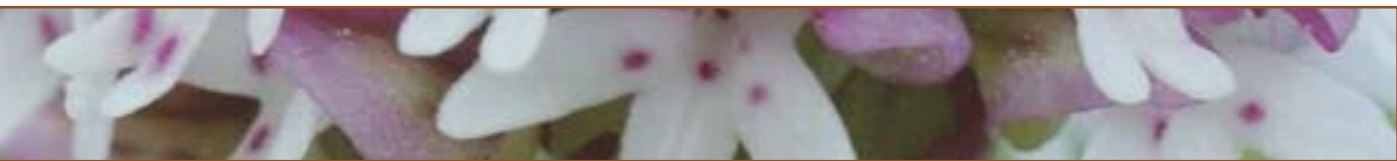
30

PREPARATION

Preparation is an essential component of any stakeholder involvement activity. During the preparation various stages of the stakeholder involvement strategy within the wider project planning and management are reviewed and the necessary preparation activities carried out. Aspects of the general information gathering (see below) can be part of the preparation phase if the manager or the team doesn't know the area well.

Being flexible and responsive to individuals and circumstances (which often translates into an ability to listen to other stakeholders) can be critical to success. In addition, being able to change or modify an approach at a key stage or stages of delivery is likely to be an essential skill or attribute for a project leader or project team. It is therefore important to prepare for change by building an element of flexibility (for instance in relation to funding streams, meeting frequency, etc.) into project planning.

The elements described below should be integrated in the overall preparation activities.



Recommendations

1. Apply the **'5Ps law': Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance!**
2. Although preparation is essential for coordinating the various elements of successful stakeholder involvement, the dynamics of the process should also allow for adaptation to new insights and situations, i.e. flexibility should be allowed in the execution of the approach.
3. Implementation needs to address many facets of complex social, political and ecological systems that differ according to cultural circumstances.
4. There are no universal recipes for solving the challenges of a successful ecological network implementation. Each region and mix of stakeholders requires tailored approaches and unique solutions.
5. Whilst there are no universal solutions, some specific recommendations for the best ways to guide the process appear to be widely applicable in the European context. These are covered in the following sections and are:
 - a) Strong guidance and effective leadership and dynamic project planning and management
 - b) Strategic stakeholder involvement
 - c) Clear communication based on well founded knowledge and information
 - d) Identifying (communicating) and exploiting the benefits of ecological networks
 - e) Adaptation of the strategy to the issue at stake

Case study

Lebensraum Lechtal: an ecological network along a river; a best practice example from Bavaria (Germany)

Thorough planning and preparation led a very complex project involving more than a 100 stakeholders to a successful end.

Led by highly qualified process managers, the project ended in ecological connectivity being improved along 170 km of the river. It was a result of adapted management, some land purchase and efficient active involvement of numerous local stakeholders.

www.lebensraum-lechtal.com

Photo: Various orchid species in the meadows of the Lech River Valley benefit from extensive and connected protected areas provided by the Lebensraum Lechtal project.



Tools & resources (page 33)

- logical framework
- action plan
- Gantt chart
- mailing lists

Sound information is a basic support for any process involving stakeholders. In the context of stakeholder involvement in ecological networks implementation, information includes all data relevant to the communication with the stakeholders with the ultimate aim of reaching agreement about actual activities.

Discussions and negotiations about possible future changes in land use and management to accommodate ecological networks need to rest on a solid information base. Both objective factual information (i.e. about the ecology, the road network, the urban development plans) and subjective information (knowing what people feel about their environment) are required.

Information typically consists of reports, maps, baseline surveys, but also includes oral recommendations and knowledge retrieved from local experience. Information is not the same as truth or objective knowledge. It also includes knowledge of perceptions and possible misconceptions. Also included are overviews of the people and organizations owning and managing the land, other plans and projects developed for the area, etc.

Information gathering and management runs throughout the project as it integrates the results obtained through analysis, consultation and participation to update the information base and support the participative decision making process.

Some information is primary information, obtained from published sources, while other information is derived as a result of the process itself (see consultation and participation).

Recommendations

1. Make sure you know what you are talking about when engaging with stakeholders. You not only need the skills but also a good understanding of the area and its people. Therefore spend some time on collecting and absorbing the basic information relating to the areas in which you plan your activities.
2. In terms of the open approach, where possible:
 - a) Use local knowledge and experience
 - b) Make use of the available technologies adapted to the needs and capacities of the participating stakeholders (in some cases advanced web based tools will be useful, while in others drawing a map on a piece of paper will be the best solution)
3. A sound ecological underpinning of the project is essential for achieving the best results. Therefore:
 - a) Ecological knowledge should be integrated in the discussions
 - b) Project goals in terms of ecological objectives should be clear
 - c) Monitoring is essential to be able to evaluate the results in terms of management and conservation objectives and to communicate successes

Case study

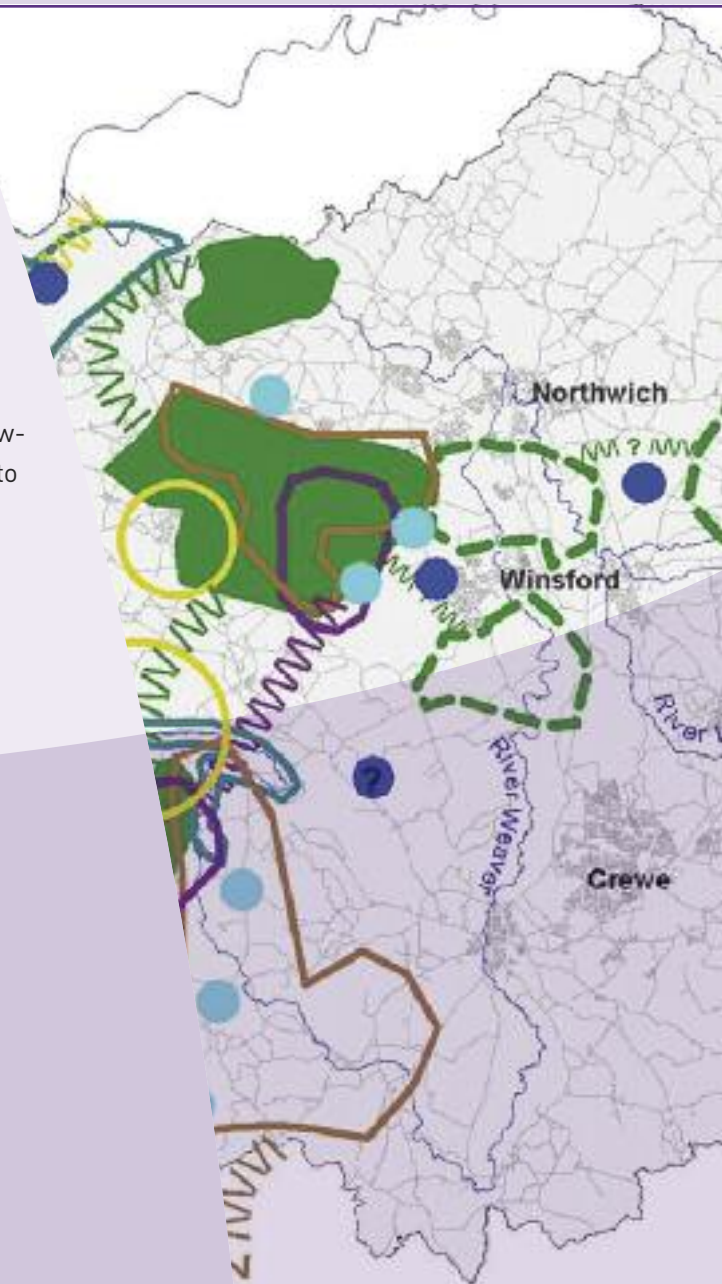
Cheshire Econet (UK)

Strategic stakeholder involvement for an efficient planning and implementation

The three-stage, sequential development of the Cheshire Econet initiative appeared to be a key feature in its success. A small expert group laid the foundations which were then refined with local knowledge and used as the basis for wider participation to discuss scenarios integrating local knowledge with stakeholders in participatory workshops.

<http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/econet/>

Photo: Map of the Cheshire Econet



Tools & resources (page 35)

- literature review
- rapid rural appraisal

ANALYSIS

A further element of the stakeholder involvement process is to understand the information, the situation and the people involved. Thorough analysis (including ➡ situation analysis and ➡ stakeholder analysis) is what should be applied to gain such insights. If done well, the situation analysis will result in a greater understanding of the ecological and socio-economic issues and priorities, the people affected and how to involve them. The situation analysis can be expanded with a gap analysis that will enable the identification of the information gaps and how to fill them. This is especially important if the local stakeholders are considered as potential sources of information to fill the knowledge gaps.



Recommendations

1. Stakeholders should be identified and analysed at an early stage.
2. Each stakeholder group should be involved and consulted in a proper and tailored way.
3. The key stakeholders should be identified on the basis of their importance and their power to (positively) influence the process. On that basis, strategic partnerships with trusted and influential stakeholders should be created.
4. These key stakeholders should be actively involved in the planning and implementation process from an early stage (drafting of spatial and management plans, taking strategic decisions, etc).
5. The secondary stakeholders should be informed and consulted at an early stage (planning) and be kept informed throughout the process.
6. Critical success factors in involving stakeholders also include:
 - a) Building trust through effective communication
 - b) Being visible and available for face to face contact when and where appropriate
 - c) Ensuring continuity in the process through strong project management
 - d) And often last but not least: having a dedicated project manager

Case study

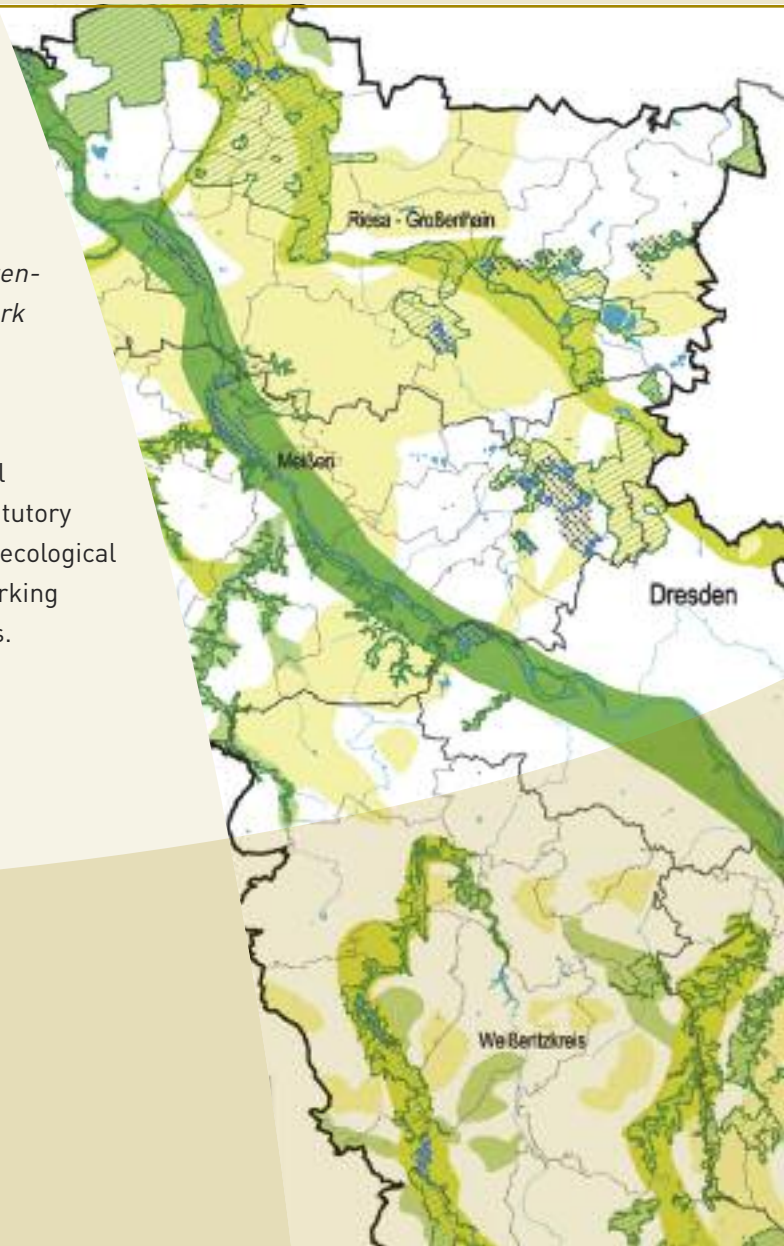
Integration of the ecological networks concept in a regional plan of Upper Elbe Valley / East Ore Mountains (Germany)

A (regional) spatial plan with far-reaching, extensive provisions for a regional ecological network was adopted following very detailed and well documented analysis.

Identification of priority areas of the ecological network and their inclusion in the regional statutory spatial plan was accomplished due to a sound ecological analysis; preparation of a detailed internal working document; and consultation with stakeholders.

www.rpv-elbtalosterz.de

Photo: Regional plan of the ecological network



Tools & resources (page 36)

- stakeholder analysis
- situation analysis
- gap analysis
- SWOT analysis

Effective communication is a corner stone to success and a cross-cutting theme! The proper information has to be sent to the right people through the most adequate means. The information and analysis phases provide the ingredients for developing a communication plan that meets the needs of the specific situation. The stakeholder analysis defines the target audiences to reach and address through the communication plan. In selecting the most appropriate elements of the communication strategy three questions must be answered:

1. What do I want to communicate? (**message**)
2. Who am I trying to reach? (**target group**)
3. How can I best convey my message to the selected target group? (**means**).

The way a communication is set up depends on: the message (is it neutral and informative or should it convince; is it factual and simple or rather technical and complicated?); and the target group (are the receivers of the message likely to have a benevolent or opposing attitude; what is their intellectual or educational background?). These factors will determine the means of communication (written, visual, etc.) Not everybody has the skills or the aptitude for communicating to stakeholders or the interested public. Where the resources are available, consideration should be given to employing professional communicators (written and/or verbal) to carry out these tasks.

Recommendations

1. Effective communication should:
 - a) Be adapted and tailored to the different stakeholder groups
 - b) Take advantage of the good communicability of the basic concept of ecological networks
 - c) Utilise tools such as maps and good stories to present and discuss options with stakeholders
 - d) Draw on the use of flagship species whenever possible (e.g. bear, wildcat or smaller species such as sand lizards and butterflies which have also been shown to resonate well with the public)
 - e) Be based on sound ecological foundations and understanding
2. Some of the messages which should be communicated to a range of often reluctant stakeholders are the benefits of ecological networks. The following points can therefore be built into communication plans and have proved particularly useful when 'making the case for connectivity':
 - a) Quantifying the economic benefits of ecological networks and making them explicit for stakeholders at all levels, but in particular for involved land users and local actors
 - b) Cost benefit analysis can help to demonstrate the benefits of ecological networks as opposed to other land use options
 - c) Communicating the direct benefits which include increased opportunities in terms of employment and income diversification (e.g. through branding of local products)
 - d) Communicating the indirect benefits which include a wide range of goods and services to society such as flood mitigation, fresh water production, air purification

Case study

Save the wildcat (Germany)

Using a flagship species to communicate the concept of ecological networks to a wider audience.

The wildcat was chosen as the flagship species for this project because it requires a vast area of well connected forest habitat and is positively perceived by the public. This was a key factor in communicating the need for increased ecological connectivity to the wider public. The project further benefited from a good knowledge base regarding wildcat ecology and a good network of cooperating NGOs and local authorities.

www.nationalpark-hainich.de

Photo: The wildcat, a forest dwelling species requiring large well connected areas of habitat



Tools & resources (page 38)

Visual

- ➔ displays
- ➔ DVDs
- ➔ presentations

Written

- ➔ brochures
- ➔ newsletters
- ➔ press releases

CONSULTATION

Consultation is a two-way flow of information and opinion exchange. It is a regulatory process of actively seeking the opinions of interested and affected groups. Its main goals are to improve the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large-scale projects. They are informed of the overarching plan or idea (through communication) and asked specific questions related to the projected changes. Answers obtained through the consultation allow the manager to integrate priorities and ideas of the stakeholders in the further development of the plan. Results of the consultation can also be used to fill knowledge gaps (→ gap analysis); for example local (traditional) ecological knowledge can fill gaps in scientific knowledge.

Consultation may be a one-stage process, but preferably it should be a continuing dialogue. A wide array of tools and techniques exist to gather information through consultation, from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, to open e-consultations on the internet. Good understanding of the various stakeholders (→ stakeholder analysis) and the issues (→ situation analysis) are essential to define the questions, select the adequate techniques or means, and identify the target groups of the consultation (see also Communication).

Consultation increases the level of transparency and it may help to improve the quality of the planned project by:

- Bringing the expertise, perspectives and ideas for alternative actions of those directly affected into the discussion
- Helping the project manager to balance opposing interests
- Identifying unintended effects and practical problems of the planned projects
- Providing a quality check on the administration's assessment of costs and benefits
- Identifying interactions between regulations from various parts of government

Recommendations

1. Ensure a good understanding of the stakeholders. The results of the stakeholder analysis should indicate which groups or representatives to reach with each specific consultation approach.
2. Pay attention to the phrasing of questions (open or closed, neutral or leading, according to the need).
3. Enable equal access to relevant information for all stakeholders. Withholding information will be very damaging to the trust which is essential.
4. Begin the consultation process in time as it might enhance voluntary compliance. There are at least two reasons for that: first because changes are announced in a timely manner and there is time to adjust to changes; and second because the sense of legitimacy and shared ownership given by the consultation motivates affected parties to accept the project.

Case study

Collaborative definition of green network areas and environmental land-use conditions in Pärnu County (Estonia)

Claims against establishment of green areas received from different sectors resolved through consultations.

Open communication by the specialists and willingness to listen to opposing views; consultation with identified key stakeholders from an early stage; continued dialogue throughout the process; together with active participants engaged in planning process resulted in a successful 'Green Network' establishment.

www.parnumaa.ee

Photo: 'Green Network' – ecological network of Estonia



Tools & resources (page 39)

- opinion polls
- questionnaires
- focus groups
- in-depth interviews
- e-consultation
- public hearings

PARTICIPATION

An even more dynamic and interactive way of involving the stakeholders is to have them actively participate in the plan development process and/or its implementation. Participation is usually meant to facilitate implementation and improve compliance, consensus, and political support even further. By offering stakeholders a role in the development and/or implementation of the project, the sense of 'ownership' of, or commitment to the project may be increased beyond what is likely to be achieved via a purely consultative approach. This involves setting up ↻ citizens groups, ↻ stakeholder committees, or ↻ collaborative task forces and using techniques such as ↻ workshops, ↻ facilitated meetings and ↻ brainstorming sessions.



Recommendations

1. Help people feel fully heard. Only when people feel fully heard, will they be able to hear others and, ultimately, join in collaborative deliberation and co-creative problem-solving.
2. Focus on shared needs and issues - create a feeling of mutual dependency. The stakeholders should realise that they all need each other.
3. Create and maintain positive power sharing among all participants. None of the stakeholders should come to dominate the process. All should take part on an equal basis.
4. Separate the people from the problems. Do not blame people for the problems they have or the problems they want to discuss.
5. Understand the difference between interests and positions.
6. Generate options that bear the support of participants.
7. Make agreements that are mutually beneficial.
8. Make it clear what can and what cannot be changed. From the beginning all the stakeholders should be aware of the 'limits' of the process. No group of stakeholders has the power to change to law or spend money that is not available.

Case study

Lonjsko Polje Nature Park (Croatia)

Organising local stakeholders to increase the process efficiency and ownership

The Central Posavina Stakeholders Committee in Lonjsko Polje Nature Park allowed the creation of synergies between stakeholders; the integration of communication into the planning; and permitted an open, interactive dialogue with, and consultation and understanding of all stakeholders.

<http://life.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr>

Photo: Meeting of the Central Posavina Stakeholders Committee
www.ramsar.org



Tools & resources (page 41)

- ➔ citizens groups
- ➔ stakeholder committees
- ➔ collaborative task forces
- ➔ workshops
- ➔ facilitated meetings
- ➔ brainstorming sessions

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Wherever stakeholders with diverging and conflicting interests are included in the definition or development of plans, conflicts are bound to appear. It is essential to anticipate such situations and to be prepared with the right tools and skills to resolve differences. Approaches to solving conflicts include ➡ negotiation, ➡ conflict resolution, ➡ consensus building and ➡ mediation. Skilful practitioners will creatively combine several of these approaches as needed to resolve conflicts as they appear.

Unresolved conflicts are potentially very dangerous in the long term as they can create a deep lack of trust among the stakeholders involved. Unless they are solved quickly, such problems may negatively affect the delivery of current projects and programmes and jeopardise the success of future projects. Indeed, conflicts are often a legacy from previous stand-offs between opposing stakeholders or interest groups. New plans can revive old sores.



Recommendations

1. Avoiding conflict in the first place is better than having to manage or resolve it.
2. Make sure that the communication is open and transparent.
3. Ensure that the key stakeholders are involved from the outset and are given a genuine chance to express their views; and then to see that their views are clearly reflected in words and action; (one way to do this is through running an interactive decision-making process - see next section).
4. When it proves difficult to establish successful communication with a particular target group, perhaps because there have been conflicts in the past, then it is often a great help if another group can serve as an intermediary (a negotiator and messenger) between you and the target group. For this to work, the intermediary:
 - a) Has to have the trust of both you and the group you want to reach
 - b) Have no clear interests in the issue
 - c) Be prepared to undertake this role
5. In the process of conflict management it can be very useful to involve neutral outsiders to guide discussions and steer the process. However they should be really neutral and not in any way be associated with one or more of the stakeholders!

Case study

Negotiation processes in the creation and implementation of the 'Green Network' in Keila Rural Municipality (Estonia)

'Green Network' plan established in accordance with local conditions and stakeholders interests and therefore effectively implemented

Different planning levels require different approaches. Accepting the facts that: some pressure from locals to adapt plans to local conditions is unavoidable; land owners should be included at the early phase of planning; some tradeoffs are inevitable; led to successful project implementation.

www.keila.ee

Photo: Detail of nature in Keila municipality



Tools & resources (page 43)

- ➔ negotiation techniques
- ➔ consensus building
- ➔ mediation

DECISION-MAKING

All of the above elements should ultimately converge on the objective of making informed and effective decisions that will lead to the successful implementation or delivery of ecological networks. Some formal techniques do exist that can help in reaching decisions, especially when there are stand offs, or when the costs and benefits for the different stakeholders are not clear from the outset. Techniques such as ➡ prioritising, ➡ cost benefit analysis, ➡ Pareto analysis and ➡ multi-criteria analysis can help in gaining an insight into the costs and benefits of various options and thereby support the process of joint decision making.

Involving important stakeholders in the decision making process has several advantages when compared to decision making 'behind closed doors'. These include:

- The interests, goals and experiences of different stakeholders that might seriously hinder project implementation will be clarified at an early stage, so that they can be dealt with much more effectively
- Seemingly separated problems (such as agricultural, ecological, water problems) can be linked and solved in relation with each other; in this way the solutions of one party will not automatically become the problems of the other
- Good ideas existing among stakeholders from 'the field' can be integrated and will not be isolated and neglected
- Stakeholders' support will develop during the decision making process (instead of being 'created' afterwards)
- Many stakeholders will learn about the value of nature by talking about a common plan

The participatory process includes a range of skills and techniques like ➡ brainstorming sessions that can be used to accomplish the steps that make up the process of decision making and which are set out in the recommendations below; other aspects such as data gathering have already been covered in the above sections.

Recommendations

1. Agree goals and outcomes as a basis for clarifying exactly what needs to be accomplished and to keep stakeholders on a specific path.
2. Use the data and information that has been gathered to provide decision makers with evidence to help them come up with a solution.
3. Brainstorm to develop alternative solutions and agree a set of criteria against which to judge them (e.g. cost, long term sustainability, wildlife gains, economic benefits, etc.).
4. Use the criteria as a basis for eliminating the weaker alternatives.
5. Make the decision by selecting the one that everyone agrees will deliver the best solution.
6. Once the decision is made, take action. immediately and implement it.
7. Observe and monitor the outcomes of implementing the decision and feed the results back into the process in order to improve future decision making, develop best practice and increase learning experiences.

DECISION-MAKING

All of the above elements should ultimately converge on the objective of making informed and effective decisions that will lead to the successful implementation or delivery of ecological networks. Some formal techniques do exist that can help in reaching decisions, especially when there are stand offs, or when the costs and benefits for the different stakeholders are not clear from the outset. Techniques such as ➡ prioritising, ➡ cost benefit analysis, ➡ Pareto analysis and ➡ multi-criteria analysis can help in gaining an insight into the costs and benefits of various options and thereby support the process of joint decision making.

Involving important stakeholders in the decision making process has several advantages when compared to decision making 'behind closed doors'. These include:

- The interests, goals and experiences of different stakeholders that might seriously hinder project implementation will be clarified at an early stage, so that they can be dealt with much more effectively
- Seemingly separated problems (such as agricultural, ecological, water problems) can be linked and solved in relation with each other; in this way the solutions of one party will not automatically become the problems of the other
- Good ideas existing among stakeholders from 'the field' can be integrated and will not be isolated and neglected
- Stakeholders' support will develop during the decision making process (instead of being 'created' afterwards)
- Many stakeholders will learn about the value of nature by talking about a common plan

The participatory process includes a range of skills and techniques like ➡ brainstorming sessions that can be used to accomplish the steps that make up the process of decision making and which are set out in the recommendations below; other aspects such as data gathering have already been covered in the above sections.

Recommendations

1. Agree goals and outcomes as a basis for clarifying exactly what needs to be accomplished and to keep stakeholders on a specific path.
2. Use the data and information that has been gathered to provide decision makers with evidence to help them come up with a solution.
3. Brainstorm to develop alternative solutions and agree a set of criteria against which to judge them (e.g. cost, long term sustainability, wildlife gains, economic benefits, etc.).
4. Use the criteria as a basis for eliminating the weaker alternatives.
5. Make the decision by selecting the one that everyone agrees will deliver the best solution.
6. Once the decision is made, take action. immediately and implement it.
7. Observe and monitor the outcomes of implementing the decision and feed the results back into the process in order to improve future decision making, develop best practice and increase learning experiences.

Case study

Wolf Management Plan

(Croatia)

Participation of local interest groups in joint planning and decision making resulted in a successful Wolf Management Plan and conservation effort

Joint planning and decision making, supported by communication which played an essential role in raising the awareness of all stakeholders, including wide public and their support in conservation of wolves in Croatia, resulted in a consensus by stakeholders who originally held strongly opposing views.

www.life-vuk.hr

Photo: Wolves are given radio-collars for tracking by telemetry



Tools & resources (page 44)

- ➔ Pareto analysis
- ➔ cost benefit analysis
- ➔ multi criteria analysis
- ➔ prioritising

The following list is elaborated with descriptions and notes in the following pages. We also recommend that the reader interested in pursuing further sources of information should use the headings as key words to search in Google.

Preparation tools & resources

(page 33)

- ➔ logical framework
- ➔ action plan
- ➔ Gantt chart
- ➔ mailing lists

Information tools & resources

(page 35)

- ➔ literature review
- ➔ rapid rural appraisal

Analysis tools & resources

(page 36)

- ➔ stakeholder analysis
- ➔ situation analysis
- ➔ gap analysis
- ➔ SWOT analysis

Communication tools & resources

(page 38)

- ➔ displays
- ➔ DVDs
- ➔ presentations
- ➔ brochures
- ➔ newsletters
- ➔ press releases

Consultation tools & resources

(page 39)

- ➔ opinion polls
- ➔ questionnaires
- ➔ focus groups
- ➔ in-depth interviews
- ➔ e-consultation
- ➔ public hearings

Participation tools & resources

(page 41)

- ➔ citizens groups
- ➔ stakeholder committees
- ➔ collaborative task forces
- ➔ workshops
- ➔ facilitated meetings
- ➔ brainstorming sessions

Conflict management tools & resources

(page 43)

- ➔ negotiation techniques
- ➔ consensus building
- ➔ mediation

Decision-making tools & resources

(page 44)

- ➔ Pareto analysis
- ➔ cost benefit analysis
- ➔ multi criteria analysis
- ➔ prioritising

PREPARATION TOOLS & RESOURCES

Logical framework

The Logical Framework is a widely used tool that describes major elements of a project; it gives answers to questions about the why, what and how of a project and also about the who, where and when. It is usually prepared in the form of a 4x4-matrix.

The longer term overall goals, the immediate (specific) project objectives, the mid-term results, and the activities of a project are systematically presented in the first column of the matrix (in their vertical logic). The second and third columns of the matrix present the corresponding indicators and their sources of verification. The fourth column presents important assumptions and risks that are beyond the direct control of the project but that need to be fulfilled for successful implementation. Developing a logical framework is a very useful tool in the project preparation process and can also be carried out with the involvement of stakeholders.

Overall goals	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Risks and assumptions
Specific objectives	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Risks and assumptions
Results	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Risks and assumptions
Activities	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Risks and assumptions

Action plan

An action plan is the step-by-step process that has to be undertaken in order to achieve the objectives and goals of the project and may not necessarily include the mobilization of funds. The creation of an action plan should be established with stakeholder participation to ensure their involvement and ownership in the project.

Whatever the goals, whatever stage has been reached in the project development process, progress is more likely if the tasks that need to be completed are broken down into small steps and the exact actions that need to be taken for each step are identified. Where there are several goals – each one should be broken down into a list of tasks. Timescales should be agreed and set for each action – but these should be realistic. In the process of project planning an action plan complements and ensures the delivery of the logical framework.

Gantt chart

A Gantt chart is a type of bar chart that illustrates a project schedule. Gantt charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the project elements (activities and deliverables). Some Gantt charts also show the dependency relationships between activities. Gantt charts can be used to show current schedule status using percent-complete shadings and a vertical 'TODAY' line (Figure 3).

In short, a Gantt chart is used to visualize, schedule, and track scheduled and actual progress of projects, while its graphical nature allows everybody to easily understand the project flow.

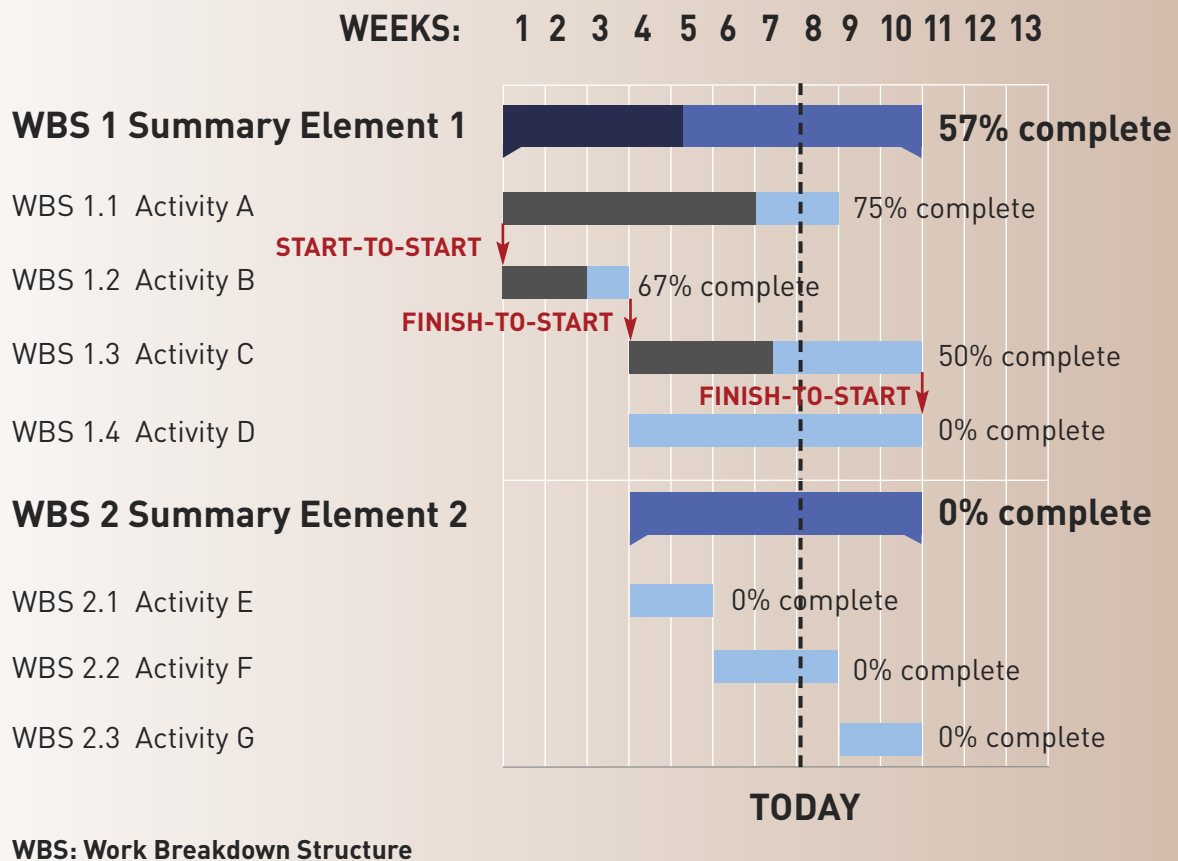


Figure 3: A Gantt chart showing three kinds of schedule dependencies (in red) and percent complete indications. (from Wikipedia, public domain)

Mailing lists

A mailing list is basically a collection of names and addresses used by an individual or an organization to disseminate information to multiple recipients. Traditionally it was referring to the postal addresses, but recently electronic mailing lists with email addresses are more common. The second type often allows members of the list to post their own items which are then broadcast to all of the other mailing list members, thus forming a discussion list. In the project preparation phase mailing lists can be used for disseminating information about the project, as well as identifying the relevant persons (stakeholders) and gathering information.

Literature review

Prior to engaging in any project implementation and especially when stakeholders are involved, it is essential to obtain as much of the available information as possible. Literature reviews provide a useful guide to a particular topic, giving an overview of the available published information. They are particularly useful if time to conduct research is limited. For professionals they are useful reports that keep them up to date with what is going on in the field.

The benefits from a literature review can be multiple. While it can be just a simple summary of the sources, it usually also has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis. A summary is a recap of the important information in the sources, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information. It might give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations.



Rapid rural appraisal

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) consists of a series of techniques for 'quick and dirty' research that are claimed to generate results of less apparent precision, but greater evidential value, than classic quantitative survey techniques. It is more commonly described as a systematic but semi-structured activity out in the field by a multidisciplinary team and is designed to obtain new information and to formulate new hypotheses about rural life. A central characteristic of RRA is that its research teams are multidisciplinary.

The distinction between RRA and other research methodologies is based on its multidisciplinary approach and the particular combination of tools that it employs. A core concept of RRA is that research should be carried out not by individuals, but by a team comprised of members drawn from a variety of appropriate disciplines. Such teams are intended to be comprised of some members with relevant technical backgrounds and others with social science skills, including marketing research. In this way, it is thought that the varying perspectives of RRA research team members will provide a more balanced picture. The techniques of RRA include:

- interview and question design techniques for individual, household and key informant interviews
- methods of cross-checking information from different sources
- sampling techniques that can be adapted to a particular objective
- methods of obtaining quantitative data in a short time frame
- group interview techniques, including focus-group interviewing
- methods of direct observation at site level, and
- use of secondary data sources.

Situation analysis

Situation analysis is often called problem analysis. It helps in problem solving through generating a structured mapping out of the sources of cause and effect around an issue. This brings several advantages:

- The problem can be broken down into manageable and definable chunks. This enables a clearer prioritisation of factors and helps focus objectives
- There is more understanding of the problem and its often interconnected and even contradictory causes. This is often the first step in finding win-win solutions
- It identifies the constituent issues and arguments, and can help establish who and what the political actors and processes are at each stage
- It can help establish whether further information, evidence or resources are needed to make a strong case, or build a convincing solution
- Present issues - rather than apparent, future or past issues - are dealt with and identified
- The process of analysis often helps build a shared sense of understanding, purpose and action.

A good situation analysis should be comprehensive and take into account all of the relevant factors such as: ecological aspects; socio-economic issues and priorities; the people affected (stakeholders) and how to involve them. The situation analysis can be expanded with a 'gap analysis' that will enable the identification of the information gaps and how to fill them, as well as with a more detailed 'stakeholder analysis'. When carried out effectively, situation analysis can create a solid baseline of information for project implementation and the stakeholder involvement process.

Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a technique whereby the different groups affected by or influencing the process of planning and decision making for ecological networks implementation are identified and their relative power to influence the process and their interest in the issue are assessed. It is an essential feature of any stakeholder involvement strategy. It allows the approach to the different stakeholders to be focused and differentiated according to their power to influence the process (positively or negatively) and their interest in the issue(s) at stake. Stakeholder analysis helps to identify appropriate partners and determine their roles at specific, often critical stages of the project; as well as to determine who to consult and inform about the project.

Gap analysis

Gap analysis is a tool which can provide an answer to the key questions: 'Where are we?' and 'Where do we want to be?' Most often it is used to determine what information (data) is currently available and what is the information that is still needed; as well as the steps that need to be taken to gather it.

In the process of designing an ecological network it can be used to assess the current state of connectivity or to identify what other areas (core areas or corridors, where significant plant and animal species and their habitat or important ecological features occur) should be a part of the network. The technique could therefore be used as a basis for providing recommendations for the designation of

ecological networks so that it provides the best value for conserving biological diversity.

With the information that a gap analysis yields, the boundaries of core areas and corridors may be designed to include the identified 'gaps' containing significant populations of species or provide the necessary connectivity where lacking. This kind of gap analysis is usually done by using a geographic information system (GIS) and combining different layers (e.g. topographical maps, biological and geological features, forest cover, watercourses, boundaries, land ownership and use, distribution of wildlife species etc).

It should be noted that this technique may also require that criteria (e.g. for the identification of new areas of land for designation, etc) have to be established – a process that can be participative, using the input of experts and other stakeholders.

SWOT analysis

SWOT Analysis is a powerful planning method that can be used to evaluate the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats involved in the realization of a project . It involves specifying the objective of the project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable in relation to achieving that objective.



COMMUNICATION TOOLS & RESOURCES

Once the communication objectives are decided and messages defined, the means and channels of communication should be chosen. Too often means and channels are selected only on the basis of convenience. This is one reason for many communication failures. The list below only includes the means for instrumental communication; interactive communication methods are elaborated under the headings 'Consultation' and 'Participation'.

The means and channels of instrumental communication can be divided into written, visual and digital. There is often a tendency to choose the most modern or most glamorous means of communication; such as video films, computer animations and glossy brochures. We tend to believe that those will be the most powerful and efficient. Sometimes this is the right choice, but often traditional, small scale communication such as a letter or a face-to-face meeting is all that is required to achieve a specific communication objective. It all depends on:

- the purpose of the communications,
- the messages to be transmitted,
- the target group
- available resources (financial and staff)

It is important to bear in mind that, even in this sophisticated electronic media age, people still prefer to meet face-to-face when there is something of significance to discuss. Personal communication is the most effective way of getting a message across and establishing communication!

Written/ printed:

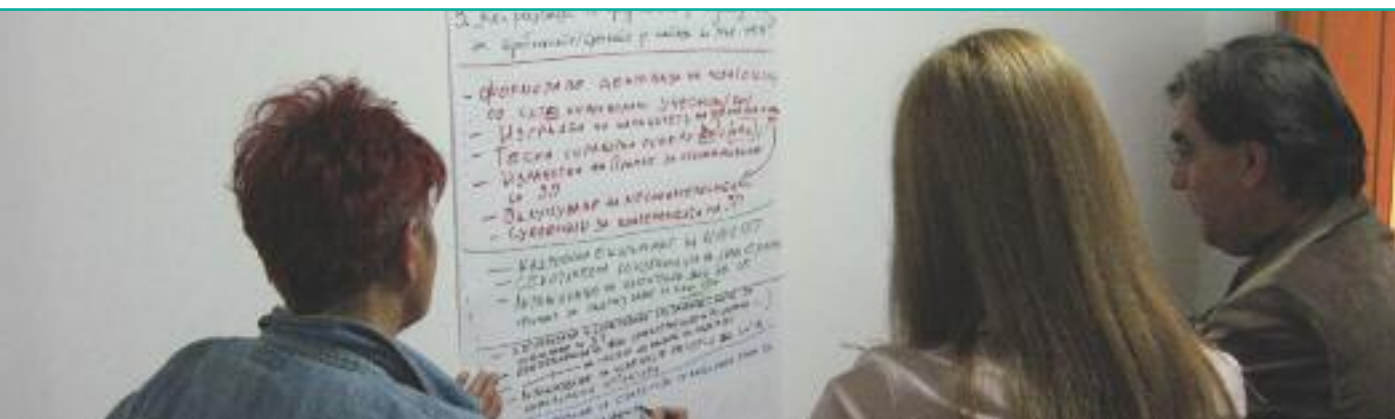
- newspapers
- books
- magazines
- pamphlets
- in-house publications
- posters
- brochures
- letters
- ...

Visual:

- television
- slide shows
- videos
- exhibitions
- ...

Digital:

- the internet
- cd-roms
- pc-demo's
- list servers
- e-mail bulletins
- discussion groups
- on-line conferences
- ...



Opinion polls

An opinion poll is a technique for making a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. Opinion polls are usually designed to represent the opinions of a population by conducting a series of questions and then extrapolating generalities in ratio or within confidence intervals. They can be done through telecommunications or in person to person contact.

The choice of sample and wording of the questions is critical to the outcome if it is to have any value. It is well established that the wording of the questions, the order in which they are asked and the number and form of alternative answers offered can influence results of polls. Although not always completely accurate, opinion polls can be a useful tool.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from a large number of individuals, often referred to as respondents. Although they are often designed for statistical analysis of the responses, this is not always the case. When properly constructed and responsibly administered, questionnaires become a vital instrument by which statements can be made about specific groups or people or entire populations.

The advantages of questionnaires over some other types of surveys are that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. However, such standardized answers may frustrate users or influence their answers. Questionnaires are also sharply limited by the fact that respondents must be able to read the questions and respond to them. Thus, for some demographic groups conducting a survey by questionnaire may not be practical. As a type of survey, questionnaires also have many of the same problems relating to question construction and wording that exist in other types of opinion polls.

Focus groups

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a small group of people (stakeholders) are asked about their attitude towards, in the case of ecological networks, a proposed project or plan. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. They allow people to be observed in a more natural setting than a one-to-one interview. In combination with participant observation, they can be used for gaining access to various cultural and social groups and raising unexpected issues for exploration. They are also relatively low in cost, results can be obtained relatively quickly, and they can increase the sample size by talking with several people at once.

They are a very useful tool for getting an insight into stakeholders ideas, wishes and perceptions but have no formal advisory role.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. For example, stakeholders associated with a planned project could be asked about their experiences and expectations related to it, the thoughts they have concerning project operations, processes, and outcomes, and about any changes they perceive in themselves as a result of their involvement in the project.

In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in depth. Interviews are often used to provide context to other data (such as outcome data), offering a more complete picture of what happened in the program and why. When data is obtained via in-depth interviews there is usually a smaller sample and participants are not selected with random methods. Consequently it may not be possible to draw general conclusions from the results. In-depth interviews should be used in place of focus groups if the potential participants may not be included or comfortable talking openly in a group, or when it is required to distinguish individual (as opposed to group) opinions about the program.

Often interviews are the best way to engage low-literacy populations. Structured interviews can take the place of questionnaires for clients who may have difficulty filling out forms.

E-consultation

E-consultations or online consultations refer to an exchange between decision maker or process manager and citizens using the Internet. They are one form of online deliberation. Further, online consultation consists of using the Internet to ask a group of people their opinion on one or more specific topics, allowing for trade-offs between participants. Generally, an agency consults a group of people to get their thoughts on an issue when a project or a policy is being developed or implemented, (e.g. to identify or access options, or to evaluate ongoing activities). This enables stakeholder's opinions to be included in decisions that are made. E-consultations and engagement activities can be done through:

- Websites, discussion boards, and electronic mailing lists, which have the ability to aid in policy, project or plan development by providing the stakeholders with pertinent information and engaging them in order to extract feedback on issues
- Weblogs and real time online chat that can often put the public in direct contact with decision makers with whom they can share opinions and concerns.

Public hearings

Public hearings are usually a formal means of public consultation. They are often required by law and their purpose is to allow an open discussion of the projects and plans proposed. It is a process in which interested parties and any other stakeholders have the opportunity to make submissions, ask questions or register objections to a plan or project. They can reach relatively large groups of people.

Public hearings are suitable for two way communication and are a good opportunity for stakeholders to voice their opinions and ask questions.

Some disadvantages are that they are less suitable for reaching a consensus and people are sometimes afraid to speak in public. They also require quite some preparation while the time available is often limited. They are often conducted in a hostile atmosphere.

PARTICIPATION TOOLS & RESOURCES

Citizen's group

Citizen's groups are groups of concerned citizens who work towards achieving a certain objective in their municipality, province or region. These groups can be very well established organizations with budgets, staff and offices or can be as small as a group of concerned citizens who meet around the kitchen table to share information and discuss how they can work to improve something in their community.



Stakeholder committees

Stakeholder committees are consultative bodies that are formed to ensure stakeholder and wide civil society participation at different stages of the plan or project implementation. It is a representative group of stakeholders that meets regularly to discuss issues of common concern.

A stakeholder committee can be an important part of the visioning process, especially when there is a need to make recommendations on land use policies, development regulations and implementation strategies. The stakeholders often come from a variety of backgrounds. They can be residents, business owners, property owners, elected officials, etc. It is preferable if their meetings are facilitated in order to achieve a thoughtful consideration of public comment and the mission and goals of the project. Its existence demonstrates progress toward involving people in projects and programs. It helps find common ground for consensus about a solution. If consensus cannot be reached, it provides a forum for identifying positions, exploring them in depth and reporting back the divergences of opinion.

Collaborative task forces

A collaborative task force is a group assigned a specific task, with a time limit for reaching a conclusion and resolving a difficult issue; subject to ratification by official decision-makers. Its membership usually includes local people and/or representatives from interest groups (stakeholders), appointed by elected officials or relevant agency executives. Agency staff are frequently assigned to provide technical support. Collaborative task forces are often used on a project level and for resolving issues within a project.

A collaborative task force can extend community input for decision-making and enhance self-governance. Task force discussions help agencies understand participants' qualitative values and reactions to proposals. They can aid in development of policies, programs, and services and in allocation of resources.

Workshops

Workshops are meetings where stakeholders actively work on analysing issues and finding solutions. They are a good opportunity for two-way communication and provide a chance for obtaining insight into each other's motivation, ideas and knowledge.

However, workshops need careful preparation and good facilitation. The strength of the facilitated workshop is that it enables the exchange of information between a group of key individuals and enables the group to reach decisions that are mutually acceptable. A workshop provides a forum for exchanging views and achieving consensus decisions in a structured framework across and within areas of the business. The purpose of the workshop has to be very clear to all participants. Clear deliverables should be produced during the workshops enabling all attendees to review decisions taken by the group.

Facilitated meetings

Facilitated meetings are similar to the traditional chaired meetings, but the role of the facilitator goes beyond that, with the aim of actively participating and guiding the group towards consensus. By facilitating the meetings better thinking, more robust solutions to problems and greater support for decisions can be achieved. This type of meeting reflects the basic human values of mutual understanding, full participation in decisions and support for each other's efforts.

The person who takes on the role of facilitator is responsible for guiding the participants toward the desired outcomes by following the agenda. In that process facilitators will use many techniques to keep the meeting moving, to include everyone in the conversation and to handle difficult situations. Facilitators will make sure ideas and proposals are not lost. They will remind people of the time and point out when the conversation gets off track.

Brainstorming sessions

Brainstorming is a process for creating a broad list of ideas in response to an initial question or idea. Brainstorming with a group of people is a powerful technique. It creates new ideas, solves problems and motivates groups. Brainstorming motivates because it involves members of a group in bigger management issues and it gets a group working together. However, brainstorming is not simply a random activity. Brainstorming needs to be structured and needs to follow some basic brainstorming rules:

- Focus on quantity - the assumption is that the greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a radical and effective solution
- Withhold criticism - by suspending judgment, participants will feel free to generate unusual ideas
- Welcome unusual ideas: To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed. They can be generated by looking from new perspectives and suspending assumptions. These new ways of thinking may provide better solutions
- Combine and improve ideas: Good ideas may be combined to form a single better good idea, as suggested by the slogan '1+1=3'. It is believed to stimulate the building of ideas by a process of association

Negotiation techniques

Negotiation is the process of searching for an agreement that satisfies various parties. An agreement may be reached either through barter or through real negotiation. Barter allows only one party (the party in a position of power) to 'win'; the other party is forced to accept something of lesser value. A real negotiation implies a 'win-win' situation, in which all parties are satisfied.

It should be used when different parties want or need to reach an agreement about the way to work, agree on a plan or project etc. During negotiations be sensitive and quick to adapt to changing situations, but do not lose sight of the objective. Avoid confrontational positions and try to understand the interests of the other party.

Consensus building

Consensus building (also known as collaborative problem solving or collaboration) is a conflict-resolution process used mainly to settle complex, multiparty disputes. It is useful whenever multiple parties are involved in a complex dispute or conflict. The process allows various stakeholders to work together to develop a mutually acceptable solution.

It is critical that the definition of success is made clear from the beginning of any consensus-building process. Most consensus-building efforts set out to achieve unanimity. However, sometimes there are 'holdouts' who believe their interests will be better served by resisting the proposed agreement. In such cases, it is acceptable for a consensus-building effort to settle for overwhelming agreement that gets as close as possible to meeting the interests of every stakeholder. If some people are not in agreement and might be excluded from the final solution, participants have a duty to make sure that every effort has been made to meet the interests of the holdouts.

Mediation

Mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution, which aims to assist two (or more) disputants in reaching an agreement. The parties themselves determine the conditions of any settlements reached—rather than accepting something imposed by a third party. The disputes may involve (as parties) organizations, communities, individuals or different stakeholders with a vested interest in the outcome. Mediators use appropriate techniques and/or skills to open and/or improve dialogue between disputants, aiming to help the parties reach an agreement (with concrete effects) on the disputed matter. Normally, all parties must view the mediator as impartial. Mediation can be used in a variety of disputes, including stakeholder disputes over environmental issues.



Pareto analysis

Pareto analysis is a useful statistical technique in decision-making that is used for selection of a limited number of tasks that produce significant overall effect. It uses the Pareto principle - the idea that by doing 20% of work you can generate 80% of the advantage of doing the entire job. Or in terms of quality improvement, a large majority of problems (80%) are produced by a few key causes (20%). Pareto analysis is a formal technique useful where many possible courses of action are competing for your attention. In essence, the problem-solver estimates the benefit delivered by each action, then selects a number of the most effective actions that deliver a total benefit reasonably close to the maximal possible one.

Pareto analysis is a creative way of looking at causes of problems because it helps stimulate thinking and organize thoughts. However, it can be limited by its exclusion of possibly important problems which may be small initially, but which grow with time. It should be combined with other analytical tools.



Cost benefit analysis

Cost benefit analysis (CBA) is a widely used informal approach to making decisions of any kind. The process involves weighing the total expected costs against the total expected benefits of one or more actions in order to choose the best or most profitable option. The process involves monetary value of initial and ongoing expenses vs. expected return. In practice, analysts try to estimate costs and benefits either by using survey methods or by drawing inferences from market behaviour. During cost-benefit analysis, monetary values may also be assigned to less tangible effects such as the various risks which could contribute to project failure or ecosystem services. However putting value on this kind of services often causes great controversy.

Multi-criteria analysis

Multi-criteria analysis (MCA) is a decision-making tool developed for complex problems. With this technique, several criteria can be taken into account simultaneously in a complex situation. In a situation where multiple criteria are involved confusion can arise if a logical, well structured decision-making process is not followed. Another difficulty in decision-making is that reaching a general consensus in a multidisciplinary team can be very difficult to achieve. By using MCA the members don't have to agree on the relative importance of the criteria or the rankings of the alternatives. Each member enters his or her own judgements, and makes a distinct, identifiable contribution to a jointly reached conclusion.

The method is designed to help decision-makers to integrate the different options, reflecting the opinions of the actors concerned, into a prospective or retrospective framework. Participation of the decision-makers in the process is a central part of the approach. The results are usually directed at providing operational advice or recommendations for future activities.

Prioritising

Prioritising is a very useful skill referring to the decision makers' ability to determine what tasks are more important at any given moment and to give those tasks a priority and more attention, energy, and time. It is an essential skill for achieving the best use of personal and team efforts. This is particularly important when the time and resources available for the project are limited.



The following list is a selection of websites and references for further reading which are useful for work related to ecological networks delivery efforts, but also for the development and delivery of other projects requiring structured public participation and stakeholder involvement processes.

Literature selection:

Barker, S. & Cole R. (2009): Brilliant Project Management (Revised Edition): what the best project managers know, do and say. Pearson Education Limited, UK.

Beer, J. E., Stief, E. & Friends Conflict Resolution Programs (1997): The Mediator's Handbook. New Society Publishers, Canada.

Chambers, R. (2002): Participatory Workshops: A Sourcebook of 21 Sets of Ideas and Activities. Earthscan Publications Ltd, UK and USA.

Devereaux Ferguson, S. (1999): Communication Planning: An Integrated Approach (SAGE Series in Public Relations). Sage Publications Inc, USA.

Hesselink et al. (2007): Communication, Education and Public Awareness, a toolkit for the convention on biological diversity: CBD and IUCN, Montreal, Canada. www.cepatoolkit.org

Highmore Sims, N. (2006): How to Run a Great Workshop: The Complete Guide to Designing and Running Brilliant Workshops and Meetings. Pearson Education Limited, UK.

Hogan, C. F. (2003): Practical Facilitation: A Toolkit of Techniques. Kogan Page Ltd, UK.

Mann, T. (2007): Facilitation - an Art, Science, Skill - or all three? Build your expertise in facilitation. Resource Productions, Bradford, UK.

Rientjes, S. (Ed.) (2000): Communicating Nature Conservation – A manual on using communication in support of nature conservation policy and action. ECNC, Tilburg.
www.ecnc.org/publications/technicalreports/communicatingnatureconservation

Robert W. Lucas, R. W. (1999): The Big Book of Flip Charts: A Comprehensive Guide for Presenters, Trainers and Facilitators (Big Book Series). McGraw-Hill, USA.

Selected links:

Adaptive collaborative management “Local People, Devolution and Adaptive Collaborative Management Programme”; Includes methods and tools such as: participative mapping, multi criteria analysis, system dynamic modelling.
www.cifor.cgiar.org/acm/

Beyond Intractability: A Free Knowledge Base on More Constructive Approaches to Destructive Conflict
www.beyondintractability.org

Comprehensive online library with resources regarding the leadership and management of yourself, other individuals, groups and organizations
www.managementhelp.org/

Conflict resolution network: Free training material for conflict resolution
www.crnhq.org

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Ecosystem Approach Sourcebook
www.cbd.int/ecosystem/sourcebook/tools.shtml

Ecosystem based management (EBM)
www.ebmtools.org

Facilitation toolkit and more
www.facilitate.com

Mind tools
www.mindtools.com

Overseas Development Institute: Successful communication toolkit
www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Tools/Toolkits/Communication/tools.html

Toolkit sport for development; Includes useful Project management tools section
www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/topic_538D2AC8-0E01-4923-B39D-4B266B60C500_62F49427-CEBE-45B7-89BB-052EBB6DCFB7_1.htm

Note: Many additional resources can be found on the Internet by using the headings found in Section 5: List of tools and resources as key words in Google.

As well as being able to download a PDF of this report, other KEN PROJECT products available at www.ecologicalnetworks.eu are a portfolio containing:

- Six national reports with results, conclusions and recommendations
- A stakeholder analysis report, with conclusions and recommendations for managing stakeholder relationships
- An overarching report with conclusions and recommendations for applying new ideas for implementation
- Contact details of practitioners, policy makers and researchers
- A comprehensive information package (brochure and poster)

As well as:

- Reports from the complementary SPEN project: 'Spatial Planning and Ecological Networks'
- Outputs from other relevant projects and information resources (i.e. SEENET project)



Knowledge for Ecological Networks – KEN

A two-year international project set up to analyse the process of ecological network implementation in six countries across Europe. These guidelines set out the project objectives, activities and results. They focus on the findings and recommendations for action by policy makers and practitioners.



ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation

Project Coordinator
Ms Aysegul Çil (cil@ecnc.org)

ECNC Headquarters Tilburg
PO Box 90154
5000 LG Tilburg
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31-13-5944944
Fax: +31-13-5944945
E-mail: ecnc@ecnc.org
WWW: www.ecnc.org

This project is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Directorate of Knowledge Management



Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

→ Download the KEN PROJECT products from www.ecologicalnetworks.eu